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## THE COMFORTERS OF THE MODERN JOB.

We are always taught to believe that adversity, taken, as the doctors say, in moderation, is on the whole a useful stimulant, and valuable if merely as a change; and it is difficult for any who have observed the evils of a long-continued course of prosperity, of whatever kind, to doubt the truth of the dogma; of course, we limit its application, as we do that of most doctrines of the kind, to our neighbours; but as Mr Brown thinks of Mr Jones that a slight check in his career would 'do him all the good in the world,' while the latter says it would 'do Mr Brown no harm,' their common friend, without ill-feeling towards either, may fairly pray for a small draught of this moral quinine for both.

But he must not stop here: if he wish thoroughly to discharge his duty to his fellow-creature, he must complete the remedy for which he has prayed; he must call upon Messrs Brown and Jones, and condole with them on the chastisement with which Providence has seen fit to afflict them; for not until he and such as he have done this will the beneficial cup of misery be filled to the brim.

There are several ways in which this charitable deed may be performed; but, with that instinct which seems to guide any duty which becomes a pleasure, Eliphaz will be pretty sure to choose the tone best fitted to heighten the effect which he views with such unselfish delight.

First, there is the severe 'serve you right' tone; but this must be carefully used, as none but inferiors or very meek people accept it so gratefully as might be expected. Indeed, though exceedingly useful in its way, it is a dangerous manner to adopt, and requires great caution; an ill-advised selection of the subject to be operated upon has been known to result in a decided snub, or even—such is the ingratitude of mankind—in an enforced and rapid exit from the afflicted house. Provided, however, that it is safe to make use of this application at all,

little skill is needed; it consists simply of a diluted version of the words 'brought on her <sup>his</sup> self.' <sub>your</sub>

Far more subtle than this method of consolation is that of the friend who 'had always been afraid of it from the little he saw.' This, you see, in the very act of implying superior wisdom, forms an exceedingly good corrective to your own blind want of foresight and care. You were a fond mother perhaps, trying to reclaim by kindness a vagabond son, and had fancied that the blow which you had succeeded so long in warding off would be at least as unexpected to others as it was to you. But no: Eliphaz saw it long ago; possibly he 'always told you so.' You do not remember his doing anything of the kind, in fact he always seemed to you to agree that the prodigal was going on much better. Suggest this, and you only add another drop to the tonic; how could he risk the loss of a dear friend by hinting at what he guessed? So that you, by your own selfish pride, only assisted the mischief after all.

Then comes the friend who tells you that it 'might have been worse,' as if this self-evident fact ever diminished the first agonies of a great grief by a single pang. This is the man who steps up to you when a Hansom has just knocked you down and broken your leg, and bids you be 'thankful you weren't killed.' He is great at misfortunes which cannot in any sense be said to be your own fault; because the arrow might have wounded you somewhere else, he almost thinks you ought to be thankful to the archer for hitting you at all. This is a most invaluable dose of consolation, for it will annoy your average mortal as much as anything to hear that the woe which he has been bewailing so deeply is considered quite a commonplace one after all, and that the morbid satisfaction which he had hitherto derived from pitying himself was founded merely upon his own inability to appreciate degrees of suffering. It has also another advantage; it will almost invariably appear to be just, though disagreeable, since nearly all troubles seem worse than they are until we actually begin our fight

with them. So that, although we may be obstinately unphilosophic enough to refuse any satisfaction in the matter, regarded from any point of view whatsoever, we cannot deny the apparent truth of our friend's unpleasant observations. We are seldom calm enough to point out that, if we once enter the wide field of possibilities, we *might* have escaped altogether. Granted, that all our money might have been lost by the breaking of that bank instead of half, still, if we had chanced to invest it elsewhere, all might have been safe.

Unless we can contrive to put a stop to this objectionable mode of treatment at the outset, the versatility of our tormentor will be practically unlimited. Be our misfortune what it may, he will always be ready, under pretence of affording us comfort by the contrast, to shew us some unhappy fellow-mortal whom he fancies worse off than ourselves—in all probability, merely from ignorance of the whole circumstances of each case. The strange anomaly in the line adopted by this comforter is, that although, in common with the rest of his brethren, professedly guided by religious principles, he yet begs us to take heart by observing the afflictions of others—the true spirit of the pagan philosopher. Here again, however, the flaw probably escapes in the indignation of the moment, and as we must take physis, we gulp it down silently with the rest.

But most refined of all is the operator who bids you 'look upon the bright side.' It seems such a fine idea to persist in shutting your eyes to the black cloud that is breaking over the heads of you and all you love best in the world, and in squinting round the corner for its imaginary silver lining, that one feels a sort of foolish respect for the audacity of one's optimist friend. He is the man with the very new hat and pleasant smile, who pays you a visit in Whitecross Street to tell you 'it will all blow over soon, old boy; you must get you a clerkship somewhere' [you used to fill up half-a-dozen every year yourself]; 'and I see your wife's off home to the country already, so she'll be all right.' In minor calamities, he it is who dilates, after that bank smash, on the pittance you have left; or, after the street accident, on the goodness of your prospective wooden leg.

If by any tone the well-meaning friend can insure the full chastening effects of adversity, this is certainly the one to adopt. None of its details seem to escape him; and by inquiry or suggestion, he reproduces to the minutest touches the whole picture that we would so willingly forget. He gauges with the accuracy of an expert the difference between 'now' and 'then,' and all under the plausible pretext of looking at the 'bright side.' By all these means, employed according to his estimate of your calamity, can this comforter of the modern Job insure the trial of patience which is so valuable a use of adversity; but if he be a married man, he has a yet stronger one at his command. Let him stay at home, and delegate to his wife the mission for whose fulfilment he feels himself responsible. To every dart with which he could supply her she can add a sting.

She needs not to guide her conversation by any artfully selected tone, nor bind herself to any fixed plan of action. So much greater is the tact of a woman, that while a man, by an unintended word of kindness, will often undo the good of all the manner which he has so studiously affected, a

woman will be unconsciously perfect in her part, and will attain, by her intuitive attention to the smallest details, the full effect at which she aims.

Observe the perfect way in which she comes into the room for that first call upon your poor dear wife after your unfortunate descent in the world. Her obtrusive want of observation seems to say: 'I won't pain the Blanks by appearing to notice the shabbiness of this miserable little hole; in fact, it might be kinder to praise any of the most glaring contrasts to their former condition.' So she goes to the window, and remarks on the prettiness of the unhappy yard which replaces your beautiful flower-garden, and thinks 'it must be so nice to have it all under your own eye.' Then, too, what a relief to have only one servant: really they are such nuisances that she often wishes she had no more herself. She inquires with the greatest concern whether you don't find how extravagantly your housekeeper must have carried on your *ménage*, and says how fortunate it is that your dear Isabella has such domestic tastes. And so she can run on for half an hour, taking the most amicable and lively interest in your affairs and plans, and jarring at every turn on the most tender of your recollections and regrets. If she would only talk and behave as she would have done in days gone by; if she would but forget for a moment that she need ask about details, however kindly, that she never thought of before; if she would not now and then stop short in the middle of a sentence, as if fearing to hurt your feelings by going on; if her sympathy were only less obtrusive in its delicacy! Her assumption of concealed pity irritates you far more than the selfish incivility of the dandy friend who cuts you in the street, just as whispers and footsteps on tiptoe are more annoying to the invalid than louder but more natural sounds. And when she has come and gone, you may give a sigh of relief, for you have swallowed the last drop in the cup of your bitterness, and your Nemesis is at length tired of avenging your former happiness. Most of our miseries would be tolerable, were it not for the comfort administered to us by our friends.

## THE PROPHETIC PISTOL.

A WAYSIDE REMINISCENCE.

'AND that,' said I, 'is pretty nearly all that I have to tell you.'

The above words formed the peroration of a synopsis of several years' travelling, communicated by me to a fellow-passenger from Helsingfors to Stockholm, as we leaned over the side of the good ship *Viborg*, and watched the countless groups of rocky islets, crested with green foliage, which arose on every side from the smooth transparent sea. My auditor was a long, lean, wiry American, with a cold clear eye, and a look of indomitable firmness in every line of his pinched sawn face, which gave him the aspect (to quote from a pugnacious friend of mine) 'of a man you would like to be back to back with in a row.'

'Wal, stranger,' remarked he at the close of my narrative, 'yu hev bin about a bit, I reckon; but yu hain't seen much, and what's more, yu hain't done much neither.'

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My dignity was somewhat ruffled by this plain-spoken criticism; for I privately regarded myself as a second Sindbad, on the strength of a moderate acquaintance with the majority of the countries which figure on the tourist's visiting list. Moreover, my listener had himself provoked my communicativeness by a series of searching questions upon every point of my personal history, from the colour of my grandfather's hair to the amount of pocket-money allowed me at Rugby. Consequently, there was perhaps a shade of acrimony in my tone as I replied: 'I've done what I could; but of course everybody can't have as many adventures as you.'

'Wal, yu air about right thar,' returned he, taking my words literally; 'I've seen a few things in my time, I reckon; but, mark ye, it's 'cause I've looked about me, and fixed for doin' somethin' wherever I went, 'stead o' trailin' about with my eyes shet and my hands in the pockets o' my pantys, like some folk. Now, I'll tell yu how yu Britishers travel; yu jest foller the railway track right square from one big town to another, and see the opera-houses, and the theayters, and the promenades, and sitch like; and o' course yu meet a heap o' riffraff, and mayhap get yure eye-teeth drawn a leetle too slick; and a'ter devotin' three weeks or a month to seein' a country with some millions o' people in it, yu come back and write a tarnation big book to say, "that air country ain't no great pile o' punkins a'ter all; the critters thar air all lazy and shiftless, and good for nothin' but to cheat and tell lies—and no wonder, seein' they're only cussed furriners, and hain't got the inestimable blessin' of a free British constitootion." That, now, stranger,' he concluded, with the paternal superiority of a missionary instructing a Hottentot, 'that's the way yu go to work; but, yu observe, 'tain't the right way, nohow yu kin fix it.'

'And how did you go to work, then?' asked I, wishing to divert the current of this flood of extempore criticism.

'Wal, I fixed to do somethin', and I done it; leastways, a man that's been a teamster in the Rocky Mountains, a gold-digger in Australey, a sailor in the Injine Ocean, a storekeeper at Shanghai, a newspaper editor at San Franciskey, and an agent for one notion or another in every country of Europe, mout say he'd done somethin', I guess, if he had a mind to.'

'And have you really done all that?' asked I, somewhat startled at the catalogue.

'Reckon I hev; I've been kinder movin' round ever sin' I was as big as a molasses-jar, and I ain't done yet. Guess I'm like John Brown's soul in the old song—"go a-marchin' on" pretty considerable, and it'll take a while to tire me of it tew.'

'And do you always travel alone, then?'

'Reckon I do; leastways, what yu'd call alone. I've got a bosom-friend here, though,' added he with a strange chuckle, putting his hand into his breast-pocket; 'and he's done me more'n one good turn in his time, so I tell ye. Yes, air, he has that; and what's more, he speaks or holds his tongue jest as I please, which 'tain't every man as 'ud do!'

And with this enigmatical preface, he produced a small but very handsome revolver, fitted with a spring-bayonet, and ornamented about the stock with eleven studs of silver, arranged in the form

of a square, which would be completed by the addition of a twelfth.

'Ain't that a friend, now, stranger?' said the Transatlantic exultingly; 'and good friends we've been, him and me; I never mistrusted him but once, and that war down in Australey, when I war gold-digging up Turon way. Two fellers cum to my tent one night, 'cause they'd hearn as I'd a heap o' gold thar, and they thought o' bein' so kind as to relieve me o' the 'sponsibility o' guardin' it. I hearn 'em creepin' in, and o' course the fust thing I did war to slap all six barrels into 'em, jest to giv' 'em a hint not to call a'ter visitin' hours. I hearn a screech, and then a patten' o' feet runnin' off; but it war tew dark to see anythin', and all the rest o' that night my feelins ain't to be 'scribed, nohow!'

'Ah, you were afraid you had killed one of them, I suppose?' said I, pleased at this solitary touch of humanity in my grisly acquaintance.

'Killed! why, darn it, stranger, d'ye want to insult me! No, by Jingo! I war 'fraid I'd missed one on 'em! and to hev my own re-volver miss at close range, a'ter bein' true to me for so many years, war more'n I could bear!' (The pathos with which he said this was indescribable.) 'I felt partic'ler cheap all that night, so I tell ye; yu mout hev bought me for a cent, any time 'fore mornin'. But as soon as it war light, I cum out, and thar I seen one feller lyin' dead beside the tent-door, and a track o' blood all whar t' other had run off, jest like a strick o' molasses 'cross a buckwheat cake; and, says I: "Thank Heaven, I've hit 'em both!" and the weight that war took off my mind in that air moment—stranger, thar ain't no 'scribin' it!'

The real fervour of his tone as he uttered the last sentence, with all the air of a good man whose conscience has just been relieved of some overwhelming burden, cannot be conveyed in words.

'I daresay yu'd hardly guess, now, stranger, that I fust saw this re-volver in a vision; but I did, though, stare as much as yu like; and the way it happened war jest so: Father had bin dead 'bout a month, when I cum in late one night from fixin' a rail-fence that one of our oxen had smashed; and a'ter I'd sot by the kitchen-fire a spell, and done a tofable stroke o' supper, I began to feel a leetle drowsy. I warn't not to say asleep, but jest so as if yu'd spoke to me sudden, I'd hev thought a minute 'fore I answered—when, all to once, I seen father stannin' right 'fore me, with his big straw-hat o' one side, and his high boots and striped shirt-sleeves, and his hands in his pockets (that war the only ghost-like thing 'bout him, for while he war alive they war mostly in some one else's), and he says to me, says he: "Cy, my boy" [my name's Cyrus Jehoshaphat Flint, stranger, and I ain't 'shamed on it]; "Cy, my boy, I've cum back from the spirit-world to tell yu suthin' yu'll p'raps be none the wuss o' knowin'. I didn't leave yu much," says he, "'cause yu air safe to go 'long single-handed, whereas them two brothers and five sisters of yourn will kinder need proppin' up some, 'fore they kin stand by theirselves.—Now, yu jest listen to me. To-morrow mornin', the very fust thing, yu up and job open the back o' that old cupboard in the corner, jest 'bove the top shelf, and thar yu'll find a re-volver, the best yu ever fingered; and may Heaven bless it to yure use.—And now, kneel down, and receive my blessin'." I

war jest a-gwine to du it, when all to once I slipped off my chair, and cum the all-firedest lick with my nose agin the fender as ever I seen; and when I cum-to agin, thar warn't nobody thar. "Wal, cuss it!" says I [though that air language ain't quite proper for a member o' the church], "I hope next time fatter comes from t'other world, he'll contrive to do it at a reas'nable hour, 'stead o' shewin' up a'ter bedtime, and makin' his own flesh and blood break his nose in this here fash'n." But for all that, I didn't forget what he said; and fust thing next mornin' I up and into the kitchen, and out with the back o' the cupboard, and thar lay the re-volver, as sure as ever thing war in the world.—And now, stranger, if yu don't believe that air story, here is the 'dential re-volver, and yu can't go again *that*, nohow!"

Against such confirmatory evidence it would have been useless to argue; and I readily assented, only venturing to inquire the mystery of the singularly arranged studs on the stock of the pistol.

"Wal, stranger," returned my companion, "yu wouldn't guess the trick o' them studs in a hurry, so I'll tell yu. Each o' them air studs on that re-volver stands for the life of a man that him and me hev clared off. There's eleven on 'em altogether, and I reckon that's a pretty to'able stroke o' work for one man and one weepun."

Used as I am to extraordinary confidences, this cool, complacent statement fairly staggered me for the moment. "Good Heavens!" I gasped, "do yu mean to tell me that yu have murdered eleven men?"

"No, stranger," replied he slowly and sententiously: "yu hev got into the wrong ferry-boat in makin' that air statement. I mean to tell yu that I've found it necessary, at different pe-ri-ods o' my life, to rub out eleven human critters who mout otherwise hev offered the same ci-vility to me; and I calc'late yu don't call *that* murderin'! Thar's one wantin' yet to complete the dozen, as yu see; but, added he cheerfully, "that won't be long a-cumin', I guess."

"The old cannibal!" said I mentally; "he talks of killing people as if he were only collecting photographs. Pray Heaven he may not take it into his head to add me to his museum!"

"Thar's one 'vantage I've got with this weepun," pursued the Yankee; "I kin always tell at fust sight o' a man whether I'm a-gwine to kill him some day or not."

"How's that?" asked I, not without a secret shudder, and a slight anxiety as to which way the scale had turned with regard to myself.

"Wal, jest this way: whenever I meet a man that I'm bound to rub out bime-by, the hammer o' this re-volver's sure to gin a sorter click—so—jest to shew that he knows his dooty 'spectin' that air individooal; and he never makes mistakes, he don't."

The perfect air of conviction with which he said this was the reverse of agreeable; and I could not help reflecting: "A pretty thing if this precious pistol should have happened to click when he saw me first, and he should think it necessary to vindicate its infallibility!" My countenance probably expressed some disquietude, for my companion suddenly broke my meditations by observing, in an encouraging tone: "Yu hain't no call to be skared, stranger; he didn't click at sight o' yu, and I'm kinder glad on't, for yu're good kumpty in yure

way, although yu air tarnation green in the ways o' the world."

As this estimate of my abilities was evidently too deeply rooted to admit of refutation, I let it pass, merely inquiring whether the fatal augury had ever proved false.

"Never, stranger," he replied emphatically. "Yu can't 'spect *prophecy* to go wrong, and that air weepun's a prophet, jest as much as Dan'l or 'Zek'l. I won't say that I wouldn't hev bin glad, *one time*, to catch him slippin'—and reezun good tew; but yu mout as well 'spect Gin'ral Grant to be 'fraid, as this weepun to tell a lie."

"And that *one time*—what was it?" asked I.

"Wal, seein' it's yu, stranger, I don't mind tellin', though I ain't so precious spy at talkin' on that air subject, I swar. It's a good few years now sin' I happened on a feller who hailed from a village on the Mississippi, called "Burnt Clearin'," 'cause of a big fire they'd hed thar once on a time; and we froze together powerful, and war jest like brothers all to once. Wherever one went, t'other went; whatever one did, t'other did; and if this un hed a dollar, that un war good for fifty cents on't, least thing. We went down river to Noo Orleans, and up to Philadelphia by the cars, and east'ard to Charleston on a tradin' spec; and I tell ye, we fatched up the dollars right smart. I saved him from bein' chewed up by a 'bar that looked plaguy angshus to make his closer 'quaintance; and he saved me from bein' drowned in flood-time, when my canoe got turned over agin a snag; and altogether, stranger, yu mout hev tuk us fur David and Jonathan cum alive agin. But all the while thar war one thot hangin' in my mind like a risin' cloud in summer, that spiles the look o' the hull sky—and that war the recollection that my weepun, fust time he ever seen this feller, hed *gin a click*."

The cold clear tone of his voice at these last words, slightly tinged with sorrow, was such as a compassionate judge might use in pronouncing sentence of death; and to me (guessing as I did what was to come) it had a sound indescribably dreary and ominous. "I used to try and laugh myself out o' that air fancy by sayin': "Whatever's possible, *that* ain't! Why, to think o' our quarrellin' 'ud be like a man cuttin' hisself in half, and fightin' right hand agin left." But let me talk as I liked, the thot stuck in my head like a nail in a new log, and wouldn't go away. And at last, stranger, the time cum when it war *more'n* a thot. One year, early in the fall, we were down in Kansas, tradin' about in spots, and makin' a pretty to'able haul; till one day we 'greed to tote up the profits, and make a fair division, 'cause next mornin' he war startin' off to Burnt Clearin' to see his folks, and I war bound to make tracks for Boston on some business of my own. Wal, evenin' cum, and a'ter lickerin' up a spell, to ile our brains fur the cipherin', we began totin' up. But somehow or another, we couldn't come to a right settlement o' our two shares, nohow we could fix it; and what with the licker we'd hed, and the worry o' cipherin', we both commenced to git rayther savagerous. At last, up he jumps, and hollers out: "I'd not hev bin so thunderin' keen upon this hyur trade if I'd known that my pardner war nuthin' but a darned mean flint-shavin' thief o' a Yankee!" At them words a shiver run all through me, like them 'lectric fixins that book-larned folks tell on, and my right hand



flew out as if somebody moved it, and fothered him a lick 'tween the eyes that brou't him down like a pine in a clearin'. (He war a fine feller, bigger 'n me some way, and all the way out as hard; and, by Jingo! 'twar a reglar pleasure knockin' him down.) Up he got, lookin' mighty wrath; and says he: "It'll take a leetle burnt powder to put away the smell o' that air blow—cum out into the forest." The sun war settin', and everythin' war dead still, as if waitin' to see what we'd do. I follered him out readily 'nuff, for I war cool as an icicle, now I know'd the job hed got to cum through; but when I seen the dyin' light streamin' down the shadowy arches of the forest, and the everlastin' trees stannin' up tall and grand, and whisperin' with all their leaves, as if God war speakin' through them in His own Temple of Natur'—by Hevin', stranger, I cum very nigh feelin' as if I war praps doin' wrong!

'Wal, that feelin' didn't last long, I reckon. The fast click o' them locks (we'd 'greed to load only three barrels each, to save time)—the fast click o' them locks war like the smell o' roast meat to a starvin' man; and when I toed my mark at fifteen paces, I felt as comfortable as if I'd bin sittin' 'fore a big fire with a glass o' whisky in my hand. We both cracked off to once: I got a scratch on the left side, and a bit o' his sleeve went flyin' jest below the shoulder. "Better luck next time!" says I; and the second load went off. He'd aimed higher this time, and the pill skiffed my ha'r, and knocked off my hat; but jest in the same moment I seen him turn half round, and go ker-chunk right on his face. I run in upon him, like a fool, forgettin' that he'd got one shot left; and he hoisted himself on his elby, and let slap, jest tetchin' my thigh as I cum on (his hand war shaky, yu know, or he'd not hev made sitch a bad shot); but that war his last card, and then I know'd I hed him.

"Ole feller," says I, "I've kinder won the hand this time, thar ain't no dodgin' it. So, 'fore yu go under, hev yu any messidges to leave?"

"Wal," says he, "thar's a gal at Burnt Clearin' that I war pretty bad on last fall—Kesia Harper, next door to the meetin'-house—guess yu mount gin her this hyur locket, if 'tain't outer yure way."

"She's as good as got it already," says I, puttin' it in my pouch.

"Thar's a feller in the next village, Nathan Hickman, that they used to call 'Straight-eye'—I war to have fought him this fall; yu tell him why I can't cum, for no one didn't oughter think I war 'traid."

"If the coon says a word agin yu," says I, "I'll grease my boots with his liver. Is thar anything else?"

"Wal," says he, "I guess that's about all."

"Good-bye, then, ole feller," says I; "bless yu!" And with that I clapped my pistol to his head, and blew it as small as corn-shucks.

"Good Heaven!" said I, revolted at this cold-blooded butchery, 'could you not have spared the man's life, even then?'

"Stranger," replied the old slaughterer, with indescribable dignity, 'if yu want to find a critter so cussed mean as to hurt a man's feelins by sparin' him a'ter he'd been whipped in fair fight, I guess yu'd better not come to Cyrus Jehoshaphat Flint!—Now, then, I calc'late we'd best be lookin'

a'ter our fixins, for them's the spires o' Stockholm shinin' yander.'

And, so speaking, he turned upon his heel, and vanished into the cabin.

### 'OURS' IN JAPAN.

Two young officers of H.M. 9th Regiment have beguiled the tedium of their homeward voyage by the joint-composition of a volume, which, if neither profound nor expansive, is very amusing to its readers, and creditable to its authors.\* If any one should feel inclined to compassionate the hapless victims to the exigences of the military service of their country, destined to foreign quarters in Japan, this narrative will dispel the gentle emotion. The young gentlemen are not to be pitied; there is no doubt that they get on uncommonly well, and contrive to create quite an astonishing amount of resemblance between life in or about Yokohama and life at Aldershot. Hunting, shooting, racing, billiards, theatricals, horse-dealing, and brandy-and-soda are as much institutions in the one locality as in the other, and the climate and cleanliness are incomparable. True, they were seventeen thousand miles away from home; but they rode, ate, drank, shot, made merry among themselves, and got on remarkably well with the inhabitants, which is to the credit of both parties, and is rather exceptional in the history of the mutual relations between our military countrymen and 'natives,' as, with a happy knack of generalisation, they are in the habit of designating two-thirds of the human race. In a careless, happy-go-lucky kind of way, these young officers saw (and observed, which is not always synonymous) a good deal of the country and the people; and a more clear and comprehensive notion of Japan, as the dwelling-place of a civilised people, and as a very beautiful and productive country, may be gained from this light volume, in which the exuberance of animal spirits abounds, than from the many more grave and purposeful records in which the subject is systematically handled. All the impressions were fresh, and made under fortunate conditions, for our authors had just come from Hong-kong, where a particularly sickly season had been aided by the scandalous over-crowding of the ingeniously ill-situated cantonments, in producing much illness and death in the regiment.

Their eyes had rested last upon the barren hills of Kewloon and Hong-kong, and were now refreshed by the wide-spreading panorama of the curved coasts and beautiful wooded slopes of the shores of Japan, and their attention riveted by the venerable, white-headed old mountain, Fusi-yama, which stands alone, an isolated sentinel, never off duty. The grandeur, the dignity, the solitariness of this mighty, symmetrical mountain are so impressive, that, after living some time among the Japanese, one begins to share their veneration for it. In all strange countries, the absolute novelty must for a time at least, if the traveller be possessed of any taste and intelligence, keep off *ennui*; but in Japan, it would appear that *ennui* can never get a chance, for the novelty never

\* *Our Life in Japan.* By R. Mounteney Jephson, and Edward Pennell Elmhirst, 9th Regiment. With Illustrations from Photographs by Lord Walter Kerr, Signor Beato, and native Japanese drawings. Chapman and Hall.

wears off. The people are a perpetual study; their intricate and, to us, odd civilisation, is always developing to the perception of the stranger in queer unexpected ways, and their absolute difference from every other race in the world making itself evident. The liveliest curiosity must therefore attend a residence among them; and to the calm observer, not bent on obstinately philanthropical schemes for improving a nation whose representatives told us with such deliciously calm politeness, after a thorough investigation of our 'system,' that they preferred their own in every particular, except the shoeing of horses, their condition must be very satisfactory. Considering the tumultuous condition of the world in general, it is very pleasant to know that anywhere on the face of the earth there are people so happy and content as the natives of Japan, of whom the writers give the following pleasant general description: 'Their manners are polished in the extreme, and, as a rule, they are exceedingly good-natured, and have a keen sense of the ridiculous—rather too much so, for we believe that if the most dutiful son, possessed of the greatest filial piety, were to see his father dying before his eyes, he could not repress a laugh, if the old gentleman were to do it at all in a comical way. Their rules of etiquette are strict and complicated, and extend to the lowest classes. Two coolies meeting each other in the street, if they are personally acquainted and off duty, will, before they commence a conversation, bow, simper, and smirk in the most grotesque manner for several moments; and on leaving each other, will repeat the same performance. This looks rather ridiculous, when we consider that the probable tailor's bill of each of these gentlemen for the half-year is the following: "To one rag (summer suit complete), 3 cash." What a difference from the "Ulloa, old cocky wax; wot's yer little game?"—the kind of salutation in vogue among the corresponding class of Englishmen.' A meeting of two Japanese swells is described as something wonderful to behold. Japanese politics, the authors declare, are things which nobody can understand; but this probably means that they did not try to understand them—at first, that is; they have some interesting particulars to divulge later on.

Soon after their arrival, and before they had seen much of the beautiful country, an invitation arrived for them, by the courtesy of the governor, to be present at an execution at the Japanese prison at Kanagawa. They went, and this is what they saw, and describe without any of the offensive levity with which military men are too apt to think it proper and professional to write of the taking of human life. 'When within a mile of our destination, we fell in with an immense crowd of people, and on inquiry, found that the criminal, who was even now being paraded on horseback through the town, would pass here on his way back to the prison and his fate. Remaining where we were, we soon saw the cortège approaching, and even at a long distance could distinguish a solitary figure raised above the level of the crowd. As they neared, and then passed slowly, we had ample opportunity of looking closely at the procession. First came two men bearing placards raised on poles—the one proclaiming the nature of the crime for which the offender was to suffer, and the punishment he was condemned to undergo; the other inscribed with his name and native place.

Immediately following, rode the doomed man, tied to his horse, with his arms tightly pinioned behind him, and a rope fastened to his waist, held by a man who walked alongside. Never had it been our luck before, and we trust it may never be again, to behold a creature in God's image reduced to such a state. With a skin parched, blanched, and shrivelled; features worn and distorted; eyeballs glazed and sunk; his cheek-bones appearing to be forcing themselves out; and his withered arms hanging nerveless at his side, the wretched being strove hard to bear himself bravely, and to behave at the last as became one of his race. As he passed, his eye lit on our party, and he called out, with a scornful laugh, for "the foreigners to come and see how a Nippon could die."

The Englishmen followed to the prison, a building of wood, in which prisoners are made to undergo every kind of cruelty and neglect. The horrible modes of punishment resorted to by the Japanese laws are justly reprobated by the writers, who, indeed, cannot endure to dwell upon them. Fortunately, this particular prisoner, though his crime was thieving—one visited with horrible and devilishly ingenious punishments—was not to be tortured on this occasion, only to be killed; and as a preliminary, they gave him, on his arrival at the prison, a good meal, which he ate with extraordinary appetite, talking to those around him, and first politely bowing to the foreigners, whom he immediately afterwards cursed. 'When half an hour had elapsed, it was intimated to him that his presence was expected, and, with the assistance of an attendant on each side, he walked into the execution-ground, and was placed, kneeling and sitting on his heels, in the universal Japanese posture, behind a small hole, dug out for the reception of his head. Some ten yards in front of him, and separated by a rope running across the square, sat the presiding Yakonin and the prison authorities, calmly fanning themselves; and beyond these, again, were the six or eight foreigners who had been admitted. The prisoner's arms were then pinioned behind his back, but before the cloth was tied over his eyes, he requested that a minute's grace might be allowed him. This being granted, he raised a weak, quavering voice to its highest pitch, and screamed out: "My friends!" Immediately, an unearthly chorus of wails answered the poor wretch from his friends outside the walls, none of whom could be seen from the interior. "Friends!" again shouted the unfortunate man; and after each sentence the same thrilling response was sent back to him. "I am about to die, but think not that I care!"—a horrible attempt at a laugh following the last words. "Do not mind me. It is quite indifferent to me. Look out for yourselves. Syonara!" (good-bye); and with a deeper and more prolonged wail, the crowd answered "Syonara!" He then signalled to his guards that he was ready, and submitted quietly to the operation of blindfolding. The executioner, who had been standing by his side—with the greatest *sang-froid* pouring water on the keen blade of his long two-handled sword—now stepped up, and carefully adjusting his head a little on one side, and in such a position as to hang exactly over the hole in the ground, signed to the officer that all was prepared; but before the latter would give the signal—and while the wretched being before us was momentarily expecting his death-stroke—

he inquired of Mr L—, with every mark of politeness, if the English officers were ready. Of course, he quickly answered "Yes," and the word was given; when, without raising his weapon more than a foot above the neck of the condemned, the executioner brought down his heavy blade with a plainly audible thud, and the head dropped instantly into the hole prepared for it. . . . Immediately the head fell, it was seized, carefully washed before the features could get set, and put into a bag. At the same moment, two men jumped on the body, and by means of squeezing and kneeling on it, strove to drive all the blood out of it while it was warm, which being as much as possible effected, it was rolled up, tied into a bundle, and carried off. This dreadful scene was far more terrible to the English beholders than the informal, hap-hazard Chinese executions, on which occasions the criminals laugh and talk until the last moment, and meet their fate with genuine unconcern.

The Japanese horses hold an honourable place in these records. They are rather dangerous animals, and as little to be trusted as the Bettos, a distinct tribe, affected to the care of the horse. The Bettos are not at all ill-looking men; their activity is wonderful, and their strength great. They wear no clothing, but are tattooed in an extraordinary fashion all over their bodies.

A trip to Daiboots, where the great idol of the Japanese worship is to be found, is one of the chief incidents of this narrative. The way lay through beautiful scenery, with the wonderfully diversified colouring in which Japanese scenery surpasses any in the world; and past many of the 'tea-houses,' concerning which so much has been written, which these gentlemen declare to be utterly untrue; while they dilate upon their extreme comfort and dainty cleanliness. It is not easy to imagine a ride of many miles through Devonshire-like lanes between groves of camellia trees, many of them forty feet high, whose place is afterwards supplied by the crimson azalea on a correspondingly gigantic scale. The rice and barley are in full ear, and the landscape presents a rich mixture of green, crimson, and gold. Quiet, quaint thatched homesteads abound, with children playing in front, and women sitting at their spinning-wheels. Perfect peace and contentment reign; and this is the land where men fly kites (without metaphor), where the houses are made of paper, and the whole country is a volcanic eruption. Troops of pilgrims are on the road to Daiboots; and the English party fall in with some wonderful conjurers, and, calling a halt, make them go through their performances.

At Kamaharu, they stopped to visit the temples, which are similar to all others in Japan in form, but surpass every other in size, number, and costly carving. The entrance to the sacred grounds consists of three arched stone bridges, in the willow-pattern style, over a moat covered with lotus-plants and water-lilies. So very nearly a semicircle are these bridges, that the travellers had to make their way over them holding on to the sides—of course, the Japanese walked over them comfortably in their straw shoes. A gateway forms a second entrance; and there they were shewn two sacred ponies, whose fate is much to be commiserated. Perpetually caparisoned in a most grotesque style, they are never taken out of their stalls, or even allowed to

lie down, being slung from the roof of their stable. Thus they are supposed to be ready at a moment's notice for the god of war, should that deity take it into his head to ride about. Daiboots is a huge bronze figure forty-three feet high, of a Buddhist god, who is represented sitting cross-legged, and with clasped hands. The approach to it consists of a splendid avenue of trees. Daiboots, it appears, has been photographed and sketched from various points of view; but one of this party, ambitious of novelty, climbed over a railing, and 'took' the venerable old gentleman in rear, when he presented anything but an imposing appearance, having two windows in the small of his back, for the purpose of ventilating his interior. Daiboots is a famous divinity, and his votaries flock to him all the year round.

The writers are admirers of the Japanese ladies, declaring that, 'fair-skinned almost as their sisters of the West; small, but neatly, nay, almost faultlessly shaped; their flowing robes displaying in its own gracefulness the model that nature has adopted, and which none of the meretricious deceptions of civilisation can improve upon; with pretty captivating manners, and a language musical and soft as Italian, the laughter-loving nymphs of the Rising Sun have many and powerful charms.' The graceful dress and the invariable cleanliness and neatness of the entire population, the delicate and tasteful appointments of the houses, in which there is hardly any furniture, and the simple and innocent recreations of the people, combined with their complacent, but not bumptious self-satisfaction, offer a very pleasant combination; and if it were not for the occasional risk of being murdered, Japan must be a very desirable place to live in. The latter consideration is a drawback certainly, especially as the danger may be excited by such an incentive as the arousing of the patriotic feelings of the audience at one of the interminable Japanese plays, inducing an ardent desire to exterminate the foreigner, and preserve the sacred soil of the country intact, or from failure to understand and execute the requirements of etiquette on the approach of a Daimio.

Among the 'sights' of Yokohama is 'Curio Street,' composed entirely of shops for the sale of Japanese curiosities, ranging from trumpery camphor-wood boxes to the finest specimens of exquisite fans, delightful gold lacquer cabinets, and antique bronzes, which are of great price. Curio Street must be a pleasant place to lounge and look about one in, especially as a stranger may go into one of these shops, and after staying an hour, if he likes, looking at and examining every article, and turning the whole shop almost upside down, may go away and not make a single purchase without any fear of having a rude or uncivil look cast at him. In return to his 'Good-day,' the 'Syonara' from the proprietor, and probably all his little family—they always have on hand a good supply of small children—will be as cheery as if he had bought a thousand ichiboo cabinet. (An ichiboo is a coin, value about eightpence.) They will, even after he has expressed his determination not to buy, offer him a cup of tea. It is very strange to read of the alteration a few years have made in Japan, of the utter break-down of the old system of exclusiveness, to learn that the Japanese are imitating European customs and adopting European dress; and that every mail

from Yokohama carries a number of Japanese gentlemen on their way to Paris, as if they 'hailed' from New York. When we remember the geography lessons of our youth, which taught us that nothing was known of Japan, except that no subject of that mysterious empire was permitted to leave it, the following anecdote has a strange significance: 'We were on board the P. and O. steamer one evening before her departure, and were introduced to sixteen Japanese of all ages, from fourteen to thirty, all belonging to the same party, and all provided with note-books and pencils, sitting in the saloon round the stove, taking notes on everything they saw and heard, at a rate which threatened soon to leave them without a single blank spot in their books. They all spoke a little English, and by way of opening the conversation with us, one of them remarked, evidently prompting himself from his note-book: "Lon—don—is—a—ver—y—big—place, sir." We allowed that, and informed them that it was as big as Yedo or Osaka. At this they shook their heads incredulously, but thought it worthy of a note. . . . "What are—its—chief—products, sir?" asked the little one of the party, who spoke like a young geography. It was on the tip of our tongue to enumerate a list of such articles as balloons, gig-lamps, chimneys-pots, &c.; but a suspicion that this juvenile seeker after knowledge had already the proper answer down in his note-book, and was only asking us for the purpose of proving the correctness of his note, restrained us. We wished them good-bye, and a pleasant voyage, "which," we added, "was a long, and very often a tedious one;" and we left them all busily engaged, entering with great pains in their note-books: "The voyage from Japan to London is a long, and very often a tedious one!" This sounds very funny, but there is an estimable side to it; and it is pleasant to find young men starting to explore a new world in a spirit of earnestness and interest, and, after an unaffected fashion, implying the possibility of their finding something under the sun to occupy their attention other than the flavour of their cigars and the condition of their moustaches.

The manufacture and flying of huge and gorgeous-coloured kites, and dexterous playing with battledore and shuttlecock, do not seem to us either manly or entertaining sports, but they are profoundly delightful to these people, who are at once so cunning and so simple, and the English officers came to take pleasure in them. A curious custom prevails all through the country, a little later than the kite-flying season. Every Nippon, high or low, to whom a son has been born during the preceding twelve months, testifies his sense of the blessing by hoisting, on a bamboo pole, in front of his house, a huge paper fish, which remains in that position, flapping and fluttering, for the next three weeks. Looking down from a hill on a village or town, it is a curious spectacle to behold several hundred huge monsters of the deep fluttering in the air.

Japan is wonderfully rich in legendary lore, and every mountain and wood has its familiar spirit, either good or evil, but more frequently the latter; and some of the popular superstitions are painful and troublesome, notably the belief, that the departed revisit the scenes of their life in this world in shapes of different animals. One day, an old man, whom they knew, came to the English

officers, in a state of great depression, of which they inquired the cause. He told them he had lost his little son, Chiosin, and that his wife and a lot of old women, her friends, were worrying him to death. 'Every beastly animal that comes into my house,' he said, 'there is a cry amongst them all: "Chiosin, Chiosin has come back!" And the house swarms with dogs, and cats, and rats; for they say they are not quite sure which is Chiosin, and that they had better be kind to the lot, than run the risk of treating him badly. The consequence is, all these brutes are fed on my rice and meat; and now I am driven out of doors, and called an unnatural parent, because I killed a mosquito which bit me!'

If any of our Japanese visitors see the dwellings of the poor in England, or, indeed, if they merely observe the aspect of the places through which they must pass in their journeys, how profoundly disgusted they must be at what they have come to. This is what they leave: 'Every Japanese, no matter how low his station, how small his means, how small his dwelling, prides himself upon its exquisite neatness. Cleanliness is universal. The matting on the floors of the poorest habitations is scrupulously clean. The utensils, mostly made of wood, are scoured and polished perpetually, until they always look as if they had just left the hands of the carpenter. We have sometimes staid at farm-houses for a few days, and in the event of a scarcity of tables, have not had the slightest objection to having our meals laid out on the floor, and partaking of them sitting *à la Turque*, or lying at full length.' Sport in Japan is very good, and there is no lack of excitement, as fires are perpetually occurring, which is not surprising where all the houses are made of paper, and nobody thinks anything of leaving a lighted torch against the wall. Wrestling is a favourite national sport; and the authors' description of the training and the performances of the huge wrestlers, who are enormously fat and heavy, is more curious than pleasant. So is their account of the mode and *matériel* of eating in Japan. But one dwells with unalloyed pleasure and wonder on the pictures of the unsurpassed scenery of the country, and especially on the most charming description in the book, that of the summer residence of Prince Satsuma, and the gardens, 'such as you read of in the *Arabian Nights*, but never come across in European real life.' They are three miles in extent, a perfect labyrinth of taste and beauty; and to look at them is to be forced to acknowledge that the best of our miniature landscape-gardeners are generations behind the great masters of the art in so-called barbarous Japan.

## A COUNTY FAMILY.

### CHAPTER XVII.—A DISCONSOLATE WIDOWER.

THE moment was not altogether propitious for Mr William Blackburn's introduction to the family circle; but even allowing for that circumstance, his voice and manner were not calculated to produce a favourable impression.

'Well, Miss Ellen,' said he, taking his niece's hand with more roughness than affection, and looking suspiciously at Stanhope, 'you don't seem over-glad to see me, nor over-ready to introduce me to your friends.'



'You took me so by surprise, uncle; why, I did not even know you were in England.—This is Miss Lucy Waller, who is now staying with us at the Manor with her father; and this is Mr Herbert Stanhope of Curlew Hall yonder.—How glad grandmother will be to see you!—How is dear Aunt Bess?'

'She is dead, Ellen.' The would-be widower heaved a sigh and pointed to his hat-band. 'She went to rest some weeks ago, poor thing!'

Without being an accomplished hypocrite, Mr William Blackburn had that sort of power of dissimulation which suffices with our criminal classes to impose upon chaplains in jails; he could use the conventional phraseology of religion, and pull down the corners of his mouth.

'Uncle or no uncle, he is either a Ranter or a begging-letter impostor,' thought Stanhope.

Ellen, greatly shocked by this unexpected news, was weeping behind her handkerchief. Lucy Waller, who had suddenly grown very pale, echoed mechanically: 'Poor thing!'

The widower fixed his eyes upon her with what he intended to be a smile of gratitude: 'You have a feeling heart, young lady, as well as a lovely face. Forgive me, but you remind me—— Ellen, dear, does not Miss Waller remind you of her that's gone?'

It was with the utmost difficulty, and only by causing the horse which he was leading to violently jerk his bit and rein, that Stanhope could conceal a burst of merriment.

'How dreadful is this news! Oh, why, why did you not write and tell us?' cried Ellen, plunged in grief, and unconscious of her uncle's remark. 'The last time we heard of her, she wrote so hopefully, and seemed so happy in that!—'

She was about to say 'that island,' when a frown from the widower stopped her. 'The south of France did seem to agree with her at first,' said he, 'but it soon failed to do her good. It is a sad story, and we will not talk about it now.'

'Your uncle has been many years out of England, has he not, Ellen?' inquired Lucy, after a somewhat awkward pause, during which the newcomer glanced askance at both his niece's friends—at the man, with jealousy; at the girl, with furtive admiration.

'Yes, for just five years.—Have you not, uncle?'

'Upon my life, I cannot tell whether it is five or six.'

'The *dolce far niente* of the sunny south makes time pass so imperceptibly away, does it not?' remarked Stanhope.

There was no touch of banter in the tone, and of course Mr William Blackburn could not judge how uncharacteristic was this platitude of him who uttered it; yet he looked up with quick suspicion ere he answered: 'Well, I don't know as to that; it was dull enough.'

'Then, for your part, you like England better than the continent?' said Lucy.

'Just so, miss; and English ladies better than all foreign ones. Why—not that I am one to flatter, but I have not seen a face like yours, which does one such good to look at, for these last twelve months.'

'I thought you said the late Mrs William Blackburn was so very like Miss Waller,' observed Stanhope drily.

'And if I did, sir,' answered the widower angrily,

'I am not aware that I addressed myself to you. But since you have done me the favour to listen to me so attentively, you may also remember that I expressed the wish that the conversation should not again revert to so distressing a subject.'

'I am sure, Uncle William,' interposed Ellen, 'that Mr Herbert Stanhope is the last man intentionally to wound another's feelings: he is a great favourite of your father's, who, I am sure, would wish you to be good friends with one another.'

'Who wants to be anything but good friends?' inquired Mr Blackburn with surly irritation. 'All I object to is the being taken up so short in every word one says.'

'I am exceedingly sorry to have taken you up short,' observed Stanhope gravely. 'It was only that I was so interested in that fortuitous likeness between the ladies, of which, however, I will take care to speak no further.'

'Is this fellow staying at our house along with this girl?' inquired Uncle William in a hasty whisper of his niece.

'No; he only joined us on the moor,' answered she in the same low tone. 'Pray, do not be uncivil to him, uncle.'

'Uncivil, begad! Do you suppose, you stuck-up little fool, that I don't know how to behave myself like a gentleman? I will let him know, though he does seem so sure of having you upon his side, that he must also win my good word if he is to continue to be welcome at Redcombe.—Mr Stanhope,' continued he, raising his voice to a tone that he flattered himself was dignified, 'my niece has been telling me that you have been so good as to form the escort of these young ladies; it is no longer necessary, however, to trouble you further, since I am about to accompany them home.'

'You overrate the trouble, my good sir,' rejoined Stanhope coolly; 'and you are unaware of the promised recompense. I am now going to Redcombe Manor to eat grouse-pie; since, as I presume, Miss Blackburn, you have not rescinded your invitation on account of your uncle's arrival. There will be enough for him and me also, will there not?'

'Yes, indeed there will,' said Ellen earnestly. 'Uncle William, who has been so long away from us, does not understand, Mr Stanhope, that you are not a chance acquaintance, but a friend and neighbour of ours, whom his father and mother are always pleased to see.'

'Yes, yes, sir; it's all right,' said Blackburn, who had seen a look of disgust steal over Lucy's features, which he was conscious of having caused. 'I am not one to refuse to own when I am in the wrong, and far less to bear malice. Let me shake your hand, sir. You were speaking of grouse-pie—are there ever any grouse upon this moor?'

Full of his amicable purpose, Mr Blackburn crossed over to Stanhope, who was walking on the other side of his horse, so that the animal now intervened between the two men and the young ladies. 'I am sometimes short-tempered, Mr Stanhope, but always devilish sorry for it afterwards. Let by-gones be by-gones. We will presently drink a glass of brandy together, to our future friendship. It seems to me that there is some likelihood of our being not only friends, but relatives, eh?' And into his new friend's white waistcoat he playfully dug a dirty thumb-nail, to enhance the keenness of his remark.

For perhaps the second time in his whole life,

Herbert Stanhope blushed: he was not without scruples (as we have seen) concerning the part which he had set himself to play; and to have been detected in it thus early by so gross an observer was humiliating indeed. His right hand closed upon the rein he held with quick and strong clutch, and for one single instant Mr William Blackburn was in immediate peril of measuring his length upon Redmoor.

'You are very observant of human nature, sir,' was, however, his smiling reply. 'We poor English folks are no match for you who have seen so many men and cities.'

'You are right there,' answered the late inhabitant of Formosa; 'nothing's like mixing with the world. Still, one can't know everything all at once just by looking at people; and— We've over-walked the ladies a bit, so that they are out of earshot—who is this Miss Lucy Waller, eh? I have not seen such a deuced nice-looking girl since.'

'Hush! Yes; I know: since you were a widower. Well, she's Miss Ellen Blackburn's companion. Teaches her all sorts of useful accomplishments, potichomanie, and to knit beads for purses'—

'The deuce she does! Why, I thought she was an heiress! How comes her father to be staying with my people, then? Is he a drawing-master, or what?'

'No, not exactly. They are both much respected in the county.—But, hush! She is coming up with us—I must apologise for *Roland*, ladies; but he is not accustomed to walk in such fair company. He is too fast by half.'

'Like master, like horse,' observed Lucy, laughing.

'Do you like fast men, Miss Waller?' inquired Mr Blackburn, stepping to her side.—She had already been far from favourably impressed with him, but there was something in his manner now that was unmistakably insolent. She did not, of course, understand that this was caused by the conclusion to which he had just been led, that she was in a dependent and subordinate position; but she noticed a marked change in the style of his address, and shrank from it.—'You pretty girls always do like rakes,' he went on in a confidential tone, that was in itself, under the circumstances, an impertinence; and he stuck his heavily craped hat upon one side, and thrust a careless hand into his pocket, to convey the idea that he also could be a rake, should love demand so great a sacrifice of personal character. In justice to Mr William Blackburn, we must remember that he had not, in reality, to bewail the recent demise of an attached consort, and may be so far excused for his buoyant behaviour; but to Lucy Waller, who, of course, credited his tale of woe, this sudden philandering on the part of the mourner—as unexpected as the curvettings of a hearse-horse—was inexpressibly repugnant, and her countenance did not fail to shew it.

'Ah, you are cross with me now, I see,' observed Mr William, whose good opinion of himself and his personal attractions was certainly not inferior to their merit; 'but I think you would be kinder, if it were not for these other folks being by. We shall be better friends in a day or two, when we come to understand one another, I feel sure.—Now, how do you get on with the governor?'

'Sir? I have not the least idea to whom or what you refer.'

'Oh, I say!—come, that's being a little too innocent. Why, I mean your emp—that is to say, my father of course. How does the old hunk treat you? You need never fear my telling him, for he and I have never hit it off together; indeed, I went abroad entirely to get out of his way. And just fancy; until three days ago, I never knew that that young interloper, Richard Blackburn, had popped off the hooks, and so let me into my rights at last!—I suppose, by the way, that is the Manor-house lying yonder?'

Lucy could not have spoken to save her life; her countenance, if he had looked at it, must (notwithstanding even *his* gross self-esteem) have shewn him contemptuous abhorrence—loathing; but, wrapt in the sight of his newly acquired property, he took heed of nothing else.

'A very tidy place, upon my life,' said he approvingly. 'I daresay you find it snug enough yourself, even in your position. Then, think what it must be to be master there; and I shall be master soon, you know, for it's quite impossible the old cock can keep upon the twig much longer; as for the hen-bird, I had just as soon she staid on as not—she's devoted to me, she is. And if I chose to say I will marry this or that girl, no matter who she was or how poor, she would never gainsay me; she always knew better than to oppose herself to anything I wished—I will say that for the old woman.'

'Are you speaking of your mother, sir?' inquired Lucy, her face as pale as a corpse, her eyes staring at the house that was once to have been her home.

'Of course I am—of old Mother Blackburn, as I have no doubt you call her, when you and your father get alone together. That's quite natural—nobody cares for old people; whereas, with young ones, at least young girls, it's altogether different, especially when they are pretty ones, like you.' He cast from his wolf-eyes a glance intended to be sheepish, and she met it without shrinking; he sidled towards her, and she stood her ground. 'Now, look at that *other* couple,' he continued, motioning towards the pair in front, who, deep in talk, were walking slowly on, unconscious that their companions had halted: 'she is not half such a fine girl as somebody I have seen to-day; and, indeed, in my opinion, is a sickly little fool, without a pennyworth of spirit, although, I daresay, she takes it out of *you*, Miss Lucy; and yet, only look how he cottons to her! Not that he has only eyes for her looks, I'll be sworn—he thinks she is going to be an heiress. But there's many a slip between the cup and the lip; and I daresay you won't be sorry to see it in her case. Young ladies, for all their kissing and hugging, are seldom very fond of one another, especially when one has the upper hand. But for the future, you have got me upon your side—remember that:

Oh, fair Lucy Neal,

Oh, sweet Lucy Neal,

And since you've got me by your side,

How happy you should feel.'

And Mr William Blackburn accompanied this skilful adaptation of a popular melody with the nearest approach to a tender glance which he could compass—an unmistakable leer. Some young women would have fainted on the spot, or gone into hysterics; others would have smacked his face. But Miss Lucy Waller only looked at him

with much the same sort of shuddering curiosity that belongs to folks who visit the Reptile House in the Zoological Gardens for the first time. He was repugnant to her, of course, but she had her reasons for being well pleased to see each cruel coil and deadly fang exhibit themselves so openly.

'We had better walk on, sir,' said she; 'I hear some one coming.'

And even while she spoke there issued from a by-lane into the road immediately before them, a handsome red-faced old gentleman, well and gaily dressed, but with his hands clasped behind him, and his eyes fixed upon the ground. He came on, deep in thought, without noticing that he was not alone, until he almost touched the pair, then looked up with astonishment and annoyance. 'Hullo, how came you here, and who is this—person, Lucy?'

'This is Mr William Blackburn, papa,' said she in distinct tones. 'We met him, Ellen and I, upon the moor; he has, it seems, returned home somewhat suddenly.'

'How strange—how very strange!' exclaimed the old gentleman cheerily as he held out his ample palm. 'What an unexpected pleasure you will afford down yonder, sir; your dear mother can scarcely speak of any one else!'

'And yet she can't have had much to say upon that subject, neither,' answered the other gruffly, 'since she has not written to me for a twelve-month.'

'Is it so long indeed? But you have been abroad, I hear; and when one shifts from place to place upon the continent, roving, as I do not doubt was your case, from one spot to another in search of beauty or of pleasure, the postal delivery becomes exceedingly uncertain.'

'Just so,' assented Mr Blackburn drily. 'You talk like a book; like one of those conversation books as folks take abroad with them—all question and no answer. But I am not agoing to be pumped by anybody—so, there.'

'I am afraid you are a little too deep for us country-folks to fathom, even if we were inclined to be inquisitive,' returned the old gentleman, smiling good-naturedly, and stroking his double chin.

'That's just what the other one—him they call Stanhope—said, so I suppose it's right,' replied Mr William, with an air of vulgar triumph. 'I'm equal to hold my own in the world, I daresay, with most folks.'

'What sagacity can do, I do not doubt you have effected,' observed Mr Waller; 'but fate is sometimes too strong even for the most able. You seem to have been in trouble yourself lately.'

'In trouble!' cried the other, turning pale and speaking very passionately. 'What the deuce do you mean by that, sir?'

'Nay, sir; I meant no offence: I only feared, from the craze about your hat, that you had suffered some bereavement,' explained the old gentleman smoothly.

'Oh, ah! just so. I have. I forgot that I was sailing, as it were, under—what do you call it?—the black flag. Yes, sir—a sad loss. I was telling your daughter about it as we came along. My poor Bess has been taken from me these many weeks.'

'Receive, sir, my respectful sympathy,' responded the old gentleman, wondering within himself who

Bess could be, and whether it was possible that this remarkable creature was in mourning for some favourite mare. 'All pleasure has its alloy, and you could scarcely hope that this long-looked-for return to Redcombe Manor, your introduction to wealth and station, should be altogether without its drawback. Permit me, sir, to be the first to congratulate you upon this day and its prospects. I esteem it great good fortune to be at the Manor on so auspicious an occasion.'

'This *certainly* must be the drawing-master, or some poor devil of that sort,' mused Mr William Blackburn, 'or why should he be so confoundedly polite? I am not quite sure whether he's not taking a liberty in speaking to me at all. But for his daughter's sake I'll let him go on. He must have a deuce of a salary to afford to rig himself out like that; the idea of his having a frilled shirt; why, he's better dressed than I am! Such a gift of the gab too as the beggar has!—"A great good fortune," and "this auspicious occasion," indeed—why, he'd talk a dog's hind-leg off. Upon the whole, however, I am glad to have met him, for he'll make that first coming across the governor easy—the idea of which I don't much relish—I daresay he will be like a bear with a sore head, because I have come back without his leave, as though his only son and heir were to stay any longer upon that blessed island, while he has been in clover here, guzzling and swilling of the best, I'll warrant, for the last twelve months. But now I *have* come, I'll make up for lost time, or else my name's not William Roberts—I mean Blackburn.'

'I see Ellen and Mr Stanhope waiting for us at the garden-gate, papa,' said Lucy coldly; 'had we not better join them?'

'Why the deuce don't they go on, and let the governor know that I am coming?' observed Mr William with irritation.

'I should think the driver of your fly, who should have arrived this half-hour, would have spread that news,' said Lucy.

'Yes, but then he does not know it,' answered the newcomer, biting his lips. 'One can't be too cautious in a general way about one's self and one's affairs, and I told him I was only a visitor.'

Father and daughter exchanged a rapid glance, the former of humorous amusement, the latter of keen contempt.

'If my humble services can be of the least use to you, Mr William Blackburn,' observed Mr Waller, 'pray, command them. You are naturally desirous of sparing your parents such a sudden shock; they are neither of them young people, and joy may be almost as dangerous as sorrow when it befalls so unexpectedly. Shall I take upon myself to be your herald, and break the tidings of your arrival to your father and mother?'

'The old woman is of no consequence whatever,' answered Mr William thoughtfully. 'But, upon my life, if you would just step on ahead and tell the governor that I am here, I should feel really obliged to you. You see it was my mother who wrote, and not him, and I ought to have got the letter a year ago; and altogether it's deuced awkward.'

'Your hesitation does you honour, sir. Some sons would have rushed into their father's presence without the precaution dictated by your thoughtfulness. I cheerfully undertake the task of envoy. In ten minutes I will answer for it you will be

received with open arms, and without the embarrassment of a domestic scene.'

And with that Mr Waller nodded gaily, and trotted on ahead, with the confident air of a stout and sagacious poodle who has possessed himself of his master's walking-stick, and is carrying it home in his mouth.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.—DRAWING THE BADGER.

Mr Blackburn senior was in that snug little back apartment so popular with his deceased brethren, smoking a pipe, and sipping some light liquor, which might have been water, except for the suspicious circumstance that there was a spoon in the tumbler, when Mr Waller broke in upon his privacy, all smiles. He was, however, a privileged visitor in that chamber, and had seen the squire partaking of that same refreshment at somewhat early hours before. It was singular enough that this old man, who, in his poverty, had been so scrupulously temperate, should in his days of prosperity—and especially in these later ones—have taken up with so reprehensible a habit; and the circumstance had set the wits of his astute friend to work to discover its cause. Why do men indulge in drink? he had inquired of himself. Because they have always done it, and like it; or because of some trouble, the thought of which they wish to drown. The first, from 'information received,' as the detectives say—and no detective was ever more keen in gleaming information that could possibly advantage him than Mr Waller—was not, he knew, the case with his venerable friend and host. In the second, therefore, must lie the explanation. Now, what trouble could possibly affect a gentleman with four thousand a year in land and no debts? This was a question which, with all his astuteness, and indeed in consequence of it, Mr Waller had found it very difficult to answer. At fifty years of age, his study of human nature (which had been unremitting) as a thriving man of business, as a jobbing member of parliament, and as a speculator heavily dipped, had led him to the conclusion, that mankind were divided into two classes—Good and Bad; that is, into men whose names were good for a bill, and those whose names were bad for a bill. The former were happy; the latter were always full of trouble. But Mr Blackburn was certainly not in the second category, and yet he had taken to drinking gin-and-water before lunch.

Mr Waller had not had the opportunity of discovering whether trouble had caused his hostess to adopt a similar remedial treatment; but Mrs Blackburn also had evidently of late suffered under some mental distress, though that was of less significance, since women, he had observed, had the faculty of distressing themselves about matters very unimportant, because wholly disconnected with finance; moreover, in her case, this worry of mind had only lasted a very few days, probably since her husband had thought fit to communicate to her the cause of his own annoyance.

This puzzle had baffled the ex-M.P. (he had lost his seat for Mosedale at the last election through certain injurious commercial reports concerning him which had crept into those rascally newspapers); but now that he had seen Mr Blackburn junior, he had a shrewd suspicion that he had hit upon the solution of it, or at least upon the right

scent of the solution. Not only, thought he, has the Squire quarrelled with his son, but there has been some good ground for quarrel; that sulky cub must, at one time or another, have thoroughly disgraced himself, which explains also Mrs B.'s doting fondness for him (since the moral cripple, like the physical, is always the mother's favourite child), as well as her enforced reticence upon that darling theme.

Altogether, Mr Waller congratulated himself exceedingly that he had taken that charming autumn walk along Violet Lane, the better to reflect, in solitude and leisure, over the affairs of a certain Insurance Company in which he was a director, and concerning which, in that morning's paper, there had appeared a disagreeable advertisement, calling upon the shareholders and policyholders 'to communicate with the undersigned with respect to taking measures for mutual protection.' He was accustomed to fish in troubled waters, and the motion of the craft (however crazy) in which he happened to be embarked rarely seriously inconvenienced him: if it should even have gone to the bottom, his natural buoyancy was such that he would perhaps have felt little personal fear; but, at all events, if anywhere in the cloudy atmosphere that had long environed him a gleam of sunshine shewed itself, it was always sufficient to put him in spirits; and such a gleam had, in his opinion, appeared to-day in the return of this prodigal son. As for the company he might have been keeping, or the sort of husks which might have formed his meals during his exile, that mattered but little to Mr Waller. Had he not already established amicable, nay, confidential relations with this young man? and (what was better) had not his daughter apparently done so likewise? He had talked with Lucy more than once of this unseen mysterious scion of the House of Blackburn, and especially upon that very morning—which had brought such news of coming storm as had made him more than ever look out for harbour—had he dropped a hint or two, which she had certainly understood, if they had not met with favour, of the desirability of her cultivating this gentleman's good graces. Mr Waller was ignorant of Mr William's being a married man; he loved his daughter as much as, or at all events, next to himself; and of course—or else what was the use of experience?—he knew better than she possibly could know what was best for her. He would doubtless have been pleased to find Mr William Blackburn with somewhat higher traces of civilisation; but still, argued he with himself, it is astonishing what improvements can be effected in a man, however dull and brusque, by a clever wife; and how much better such marriages often turn out in the end than those of mere sentiment.

'Glad to see you, Waller,' said the old Squire cheerily, in reply to that gentleman's apology for his intrusion. 'It is no use my asking you to take a glass, I know (though it's the wholesomest thing in the world, in my opinion); but you will smoke a small cigar before luncheon?'

'Just a whiff or two, thank you,' returned Mr Waller (who entertained, and justly, the very highest opinion of the virtues of tobacco for soothing and smoothing); 'but I did not come to sponge upon your cigar-box, I do assure you. I have got some news for you.'

'Then I am sure it's good news, or you would



not be the man to bring it,' said Mr Blackburn smiling. 'I have a very small experience, to be sure, in the matter, but you seem to me, for one of the calculating sort, to take such cheerful views of everything. Now, there's Moffat, who is as great a schemer as yourself, he is full of complaints and difficulties; but you, you are the pink of a business man.'

'Let us say the rose colour,' rejoined Mr Waller laughing, 'for I own I like to look on the bright side of things; and when they turn out badly, I forget it, and start afresh. The two best rules in life are these: "What's done can't be undone," and, "It's no use crying after spilt milk."'

'Then it's not good news after all,' returned the old man—'eh?'

'Yes, it is; or at least it ought to be. I have just come upon Miss Ellen and my daughter in the road leading out of Violet Lane, and who do you think they had with them? They're bringing him home to lunch, only I've got the start of them. Now, guess.'

'I know,' replied the old man placidly; 'and I am not at all surprised. And you're quite right, in my opinion, in calling his return good news; for, with all his faults, I like the young fellow uncommonly, and am always glad to welcome him to Redcombe. It's Herbert, of course?'

'Well, Stanhope is with them, as it happens; but there's somebody else also—somebody that has a better right here than even a friend and neighbour—somebody that you have not seen for— Good heavens! what is the matter, Blackburn?' The old man had dashed his pipe on the ground, and started to his feet.

'You don't mean to say that scoundrel of a son of mine has dared to come back without my leave?'

'My dear friend, pray, calm yourself. Mr William Blackburn has indeed come back, and very hearty and well he is looking; as fine a young fellow as you would wish to see. But, as I understood him to say, he has returned home in consequence of a letter from his mother, which has been unaccountably delayed in transmission.'

'I will soon see whether he is lying or not,' observed the Squire, ringing the bell with violence. 'I have had reason, and good reason, to be much dissatisfied with my son, sir; and if he has not been invited hither—and I believe he has not—I will not see his face, nor shall he set foot within my house.—Mottle, tell your mistress that I wish to see her here—at once—*immediately*.'

'My dear Blackburn,' said Mr Waller soothingly, as soon as they were left alone, 'let me adjure you, as a man of the world, not to give way so to passion before a servant. They exaggerate any family disturbance so abominably. And, pray, do nothing rash as respects your son. He is here now, with or without leave, and there's an end on't: the least said is the soonest mended.'

'If that fellow, whom I have forbidden my house, has returned to it of his own head, sir, he goes back again whence he came, though he were ten times my son. And if my wife, contrary to my express injunction, has written to him before the term which—which—I assigned as the just limit of his chastisement— But here is my wife!'

'Shall I leave the room, Blackburn?' asked Mr Waller hesitatingly, and looking from the stern face of the Squire to the pale and frightened countenance of his hostess; 'or shall I stay here, as

the warm friend of both of you, and one who has your common interest at heart?'

'I shall be obliged by your remaining here, Waller,' answered the old man, who, although looking the picture of implacability, had now regained the control of his feelings, and was sorry for having lost it. 'I have been hitherto silent about this subject, because it was an unpleasant one; but since it has thus forced itself upon your notice, there is no reason for further reticence.—I have sent for you, Mrs Blackburn, to ask whether, in despite of my particular commandment, you have invited William hither?'

'O Anthony, pray, forgive me,' cried she passionately. 'Oh, I knew this would happen!—Ask him to forgive me, Mr Waller! It was not my fault, but that letter which I wrote a year ago; he knows the one I mean; I missed it from my desk the other day.—I had been looking at it, Anthony—only looking at the outside, and thinking how pleased our Willy would have been to get it—and I left it addressed and sealed upon the lid, and the maid found it there when I was out, and thinking it was meant for post, she put it in the letter-box. I did not dare to tell you, husband; but that is what has made me of late so wretched: the fear of your displeasure, not with myself, but with my poor boy.'

'There! you see there is nobody in fault, Blackburn,' exclaimed Mr Waller triumphantly, 'with the exception of some officious domestic. I have more than once had letters posted myself in that way by my servants, in compensation, I suppose, for their so often forgetting to post those that ought to have gone.'

'I told you to burn that letter, woman,' said the old Squire, with difficulty suppressing a groan.

'You did, Anthony, and so far I am in fault; but it was my only comfort to handle and look at it, and to think of the joy which it would give to Willy when it did reach his hands. You gave me permission to send it in a month hence, you know; what difference then can a few weeks make?—Oh, speak to Anthony, Mr Waller, for you know so well what to say, and, alas, I can think of nothing except my boy!'

But the ex-M.P., more sagacious than his impassioned hostess, held up a finger for silence. The Squire was leaning thoughtfully upon the mantelpiece, stroking his long beard with a tremulous hand; and it seemed to his observant guest that he had grown grayer and older within the last quarter of an hour; the fire in his eyes had quite died out, though the shaggy brows were still knit above them.

'To come just now,' ran his bitter thoughts, 'upon the very day that that young man has returned here, unable any longer to resist dear Nelly's charms. How like his evil choice in everything! Stanhope is proud, and will never brook his rudeness, even if he should see nothing worse in him, hear nothing worse of him. These dead brothers of mine, who treated their own flesh and blood so ill, had no such son as this to curse them, and why should I have? Three weeks hence, three days hence, and all might have been well. But he must needs come now by misadventure—it seems as though it was fated to be so—and Heaven only knows what ruin he may not bring with him. And yet to drive him from my door would be to excite suspicion of I know not what, something

almost as bad, if that were possible, as the thing itself! It is no use crying after spilt milk, says my smooth-tongued friend yonder; and I must, it seems, perforce adopt his advice; but first to give him so much of my confidence as may put a stop to further inquiries.

'Mr Waller,' exclaimed the Squire frankly, 'you and my wife have conquered, although I must confess I feel it difficult to submit; and since you have so kindly interested yourself in a matter that is so entirely a trouble of my own, it is only right that you should know its exact nature.'

Mrs Blackburn started, and glanced imploringly towards her husband.

'Yes, Mary,' continued he; 'the truth must come out sooner or later; and through Mr Waller's lips it will receive, I know, a more charitable interpretation than if told by any one else.—My son, sir, has displeased me in various ways, I may almost say from a mere child; and when he arrived at manhood he crowned his wilfulness by an act, for which no subsequent good behaviour—of which, however, I am bound to say he has shewn no signs—could atone. Without asking my permission, he made—I do not say a disgraceful, but certainly, considering his possible expectations, a most unsatisfactory and unsuitable marriage.'

Across Mr Waller's face there flitted a momentary expression of disappointment—almost of despair; and for once the ready river of his speech refused to flow.

'And yet poor Bess has her good points,' observed Mrs Blackburn, intensely relieved at the limited extent of the Squire's disclosure, and good-naturedly disposed even towards the woman whose unlucky existence interposed between her son and the best match in the county.

'One moment, my dear friend,' observed Mr Waller with a serious air, as the Squire moved slowly towards the door. 'Do I understand Mrs Blackburn to say that the young lady—your daughter-in-law—was called, in the abbreviation of affection, Bess?'

'I believe so,' said the Squire coldly.

'Yes, yes, she was,' answered Mrs Blackburn eagerly. 'What of her? I love her dearly, for she is certainly most devoted to my Willy.'

'Alas, madam, she has now reaped her reward for that'—Mr Waller cast his eyes slowly upward, past the fishing-rods and the stuffed trout, to the smoke-stained ceiling of the little room, and added impressively—'up yonder.'

'What! is dear Bess dead?' cried Mrs Blackburn, shedding genuine tears. 'How truly sorry I am, for poor dear Willy!'

'She is dead, dear madam; and the happiness of your son at his return is sadly clouded by that circumstance.'

'Humph!' said the Squire, who was thinking that he might have spared himself the revelation of at least one humiliating domestic circumstance, although it was a minor one. 'And when did this happen?'

'To judge by his deep mourning, I should imagine but very recently,' said Mr Waller.—'You need not grieve, madam, for one who, from your description of her domestic virtues, is doubtless'—perhaps the stuffed trout had discomposed him upon the first occasion, for he now fixed his eyes upon the empty fireplace—'is doubtless in perfect security; while, on the other hand, since the

innocent cause of your son's transgression has been thus removed, I do hope, my dear Blackburn, that you will forget his past, and hopefully regard his future.'

This peroration, so often received with favour, when used in his capacity of chairman of some Company whose shares were at a discount, or as director of some railway which had not as yet declared a dividend, did not have its usual success upon the present occasion; the audience he was addressing (if we may so term the Squire) had for once a less good opinion of the concern in question than he entertained himself. Mr Blackburn did not even vouchsafe him a reply, but walked slowly out of the room, with trembling limbs, but head erect, in the direction of the front door. Before he reached it, Mrs Blackburn overtook him, trembling also, although from another cause, and clasped his hand.

'Anthony, dear Anthony,' she whispered, 'don't be hard upon him, now that he is in sorrow. This may have changed him altogether, for all we know, and he may live to be a comfort to us yet.'

Through the open door, was borne upon the summer wind a coarse low chuckle, and a voice upon the terrace muttered harshly: 'Well, clever as he may be, miss, it seems to have taken him a deal of time to draw the badger.'

Mr William Blackburn was sitting upon the balustrade of the terrace, between two stone vases of red geraniums, swinging his legs, and tapping his teeth with the handle of his umbrella, as though applauding the humour of his last remark. If his attitude and bearing were not artistically graceful or in harmony with his surroundings, he looked tolerably at ease. Stanhope and the two young ladies were standing by him, and intrenched, as it were, in that position, he seemed to himself pretty secure against the paternal ire. The longer the enemy was held in parley, the better (notwithstanding his allusion to his tardiness) he augured of his ambassador's success, for it was plain that the latter had at least persuaded the Squire to listen to what he had to say in his principal's favour. The evident fear in which Ellen stood of him, and even the quiet scorn with which Lucy received his observations—for he translated that as cautious reserve in the presence of the others—had given him more and more of confidence; and, above all, he had refreshed himself since we last saw him with a pull at that flask which always lay in the side-pocket next his heart. And yet, when his father and mother appeared hand-in-hand at the front-door, so immediately following that *jeu d'esprit* about the badger, that they could not have failed to hear it, Mr William Blackburn looked a good deal embarrassed, and descended from his elevated position in a hurried and undignified manner.

His mother, however, with one cry of joy, ran forward and folded him in silence in her arms; and thus, as it were, in sanctuary, he remained for a decent interval rallying those native powers of impudence and assurance which the inopportune-ness of the moment had put to flight.

'How are you, William?' said the Squire, holding out his hand. 'We are sorry to see you in so sad a garb.'

For an instant the idea flashed upon him, that the misfit of his clothes—which he had purchased at a ready-made shop as he hurried through

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London—formed the subject of the paternal remark, but fortunately his eye fell upon his black gloves, and he remembered that he was in mourning.

'Yes, indeed, sir,' replied he—and it was curious how even his feigned sorrow took egotistic shape—'I have had a very sad time of it lately. Poor Bess has been gone these three weeks. I was so cut up, that I had not the heart to write about it.'

'Poor dear boy!' ejaculated Mrs Blackburn fondly. 'What a trial it must have been! Was she ill long? I trust she did not suffer much?'

'Not much,' returned the widower; 'not so much as I did in seeing her suffer. I never left her night or day, as you may be sure. She sent her best love to you and Ellen; and her duty to you, father.'

'We must do all we can to cheer you, Willy,' said Mrs Blackburn. 'There is no need to mourn for so good a soul, as Mr Waller here has just been telling us, except upon our own accounts in having lost her.'

'Not lost, but gone before,' interposed that gentleman deferentially. He had followed his host and hostess to the scene of reconciliation, and now offered this neat quotation (which he had read on a tablet in the church during last Sunday's sermon) with the air of one who dispenses some comfortable liquid upon a silver tray. An embarrassing pause ensued; and Mr Waller continued more cheerfully: 'As I came through the hall, my dear madam, the servant was about to announce lunch, and I told him that I would save him that trouble.—You must be hungry, sir, what with your long journey and your walk across the moor.'

'Well, I could pick a little, and that's a fact,' observed Mr William; 'though it's long indeed,' added he with some precipitancy, 'that I have had an appetite for anything.'

He was about to offer his arm to Lucy, but Mr Waller nudged him so sharply towards Mrs Blackburn, that he could not mistake the hint.

'Lean on me, mother,' said he; 'for though you are looking well enough, you are not so young as when I last saw you.'

'I shall grow young now,' returned she tenderly. 'I have not felt so happy for fifty years as I do this day, Willy.'

The rest of the party—Mr Waller with his daughter, and Stanhope with Ellen—followed them into the house, with the exception of the Squire, who remained alone upon the terrace, pacing thoughtfully to and fro, and muttering to himself at intervals—like minute-guns over that dead hope which, though unowned, had after all perhaps held a place within his heart—some sentences such as these: 'No change, nor chance of change;' 'As bad and base as ever;' 'Rotten to the core.'

## THE MONTH:

### SCIENCE AND ARTS.

THE Society of Arts are attending to certain matters, in which they may reckon on public support. They have appointed a committee to work at the reduction-of-postage question, with particular reference to small parcels and printed matter; and this committee is working, seeking co-operation at home, and information abroad from those governments which have already adopted

lower rates for printed matter and parcels. Another subject taken up by the Council is Cab Reform, which they intend to discuss fully; and another is an improved form of steamer for crossing the Channel between France and England. This is much wanted, for it is discreditable to our mechanical and nautical skill that passengers cannot cross from Dover to Calais in blowing weather without being drenched by the sea. Why should they not be as well protected from the weather on the deck of a steamer as in a railway carriage? It is of no use to answer that passengers can go below. Travellers do not like going below to be stifled.

A remarkable instance of the effect of pine-trees on the soil in which they grow has been published in the Woods and Waters Reports of the north of France. A forest near Valenciennes, comprising about eighteen hundred acres of scrub and stunted oak and birch, was grubbed up in 1843, and replaced by Scotch firs (*Pinus sylvestris*). The soil, composed of silicious sands mingled with a small quantity of clay, was in some places very wet; it contained two or three springs, from one of which flowed a small stream. The firs succeeded beyond expectation, and large handsome stems now grow vigorously over the whole ground. It was in the early stages of their growth that the remarkable effect above referred to was noticed. The soil began to dry; the snipes that once frequented the place migrated to a more congenial locality; the ground became drier and drier, until at last the springs and the stream ceased to flow. Deep trenches were dug to lay open the sources of the springs, and discover the cause of the drying up; but nothing was found except that the roots of the firs had penetrated the earth to a depth of five or six feet. Borings were then made; and six feet below the source of the spring, a bed of water was met with of considerable depth, from which, it was inferred, the spring had formerly been fed. But in what way its level had been lowered by the action of the firs could not be determined, and is still a matter of speculation. But the fact remains, and may be utilised by any one interested in tree-culture. For years it has been turned to account in Gascony, where the lagoons that intersect the sandy dunes have been dried up by planting the *Pinus maritimus* along their margin. Hence we may arrive at the conclusion that while leafy trees feed springs, and maintain the moisture of the soil, the contrary function is reserved for spine or needle bearing trees, which dry the soil, and improve its quality. Our War Office might perhaps do well to take note thereof, seeing that the forts now building at the mouth of the Medway shew a tendency to sink into the soft marshy soil. If the ground can be consolidated by plantations of the maritime pine, it would be good economy to have them planted.

A paper read at the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, Birmingham, is interesting to all concerned in the iron trade, for it treats of *Further Utilisation of the Waste Gas from Blast Furnaces*. A few years ago, all the gas that rushed from the top of the furnaces was absolutely wasted: then experiments were tried, and it was found that a portion at least of the gas could be intercepted and made to heat the boiler of the steam-engine. Then, in the Cleveland district (north-east Yorkshire) bigger furnaces were built, seventy-five feet

high instead of forty feet, in order that the gas might be further economised by passing through a taller column of the material to be melted than it did in the low furnaces. This upper stratum of material absorbs heat from the gas, is somewhat softened thereby, and is of course melted with a less expenditure of fuel when it descends to the bottom of the furnace. The saving thus effected amounts to rather more than four hundred-weights of coke for each ton of iron produced. Hence it will be seen, that in the manufacture of iron, an important economy has been achieved by results of intelligent observation; and we have the more satisfaction in making these facts known, as we understand that experiments are still continued with a view to further advantage.

As an example of economy to be effected by engineering, we mention that a suspension-bridge, to be called the Cornwall Bridge, is to be built across the river Hudson, forty-two miles above New York. The total length will be 2499 feet, and the clear span 1600 feet. By this bridge the railway from the mining districts of Pennsylvania will be connected with the New England States, and the New Englanders will save four shillings a ton on their yearly consumption of four million tons of coal.

As mentioned in our last, the railway from the Atlantic to the Pacific is now completed, except that some of the bridges are not yet built. One of the largest, 2800 feet long, is now erecting across the Missouri at Omaha. Including seventy feet below the treacherous bed of the river, the iron cylinders on which it is to be supported will be 139 feet in length. From New York to San Francisco the distance is about 3400 miles, the fare at present about £31, and the time of the journey from one place to the other will be a week. They must be very enterprising passengers who at present undertake such a trip, and very robust if they find themselves alive at the end of it.

The granite rocks which have so long impeded the navigation of the arm of the sea between New York and Long Island, are now being blasted. Proper apparatus is erected for working a drill under water by steam. The drill bar at its cutting end is an inch and a half in diameter, and has nineteen diamonds embedded in its face. When in motion, it makes from three hundred to five hundred rotations a minute, and in that time, such is the cutting effect of the diamonds, the hole is sunk an inch and a half. A number of holes, consequently, can be drilled in a day. A diver then descends, charges them with cartridges of nitro-glycerine, which are exploded in the usual way. We recommend these particulars to the authorities of British or Irish ports where rocks encumber the channel, as a good practical suggestion, which may be turned to account in the interests of navigation.

The Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society have published the Report of their last annual meeting, with particulars of new mechanical inventions exhibited thereat. Among these was a pyrometer, intended for use in a baker's oven, which indicates the exact amount of heat, and thus enables a baker to save the bread from spoiling; and an atmizometer, or evaporating gauge, for showing the amount of evaporation from the earth's surface, comprised in a cylindrical wooden vessel mounted on a spring-balance. Water is poured into the vessel until the balance is brought to zero: then,

on exposure to the sun and air, the amount of evaporation can be observed to the thousandth of an inch.—Another invention was an improvement in the Cornish pumping-engine, which comes into use when any part of the machinery breaks. A cushion of steam is then suddenly thrown on one side of the piston, and thereby the force of its blow is broken.

In the same Report it is stated that the Wheal Vor Mine, in the parish of Breage, has yielded more than £3,000,000 worth of tin and copper; and that, in order to mitigate the distress occasioned by the falling off in mining produce, a project is being talked of for the establishment of pottery-works in Cornwall.

Let wine-drinkers be on their guard, for certain clever chemists in Belgium have started the manufacture of mock-champagne and other light sparkling wines on a great scale. Aided by patent machinery, they can produce the wine for sale at a franc a bottle, and gain a profit of seventy-five per cent.; and it is stated that hundreds of houses on the continent will soon be ready to supply customers.

An experiment was made in February last to ascertain the time of sending a telegraphic signal along the wires from San Francisco to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and back, the double distance being 7200 miles. The time was one-eighth of a second!

#### FROM A HUSBAND.

FONDER, tenderer, ever fonder,  
But increase my love can know,  
Here on earth, hereafter yonder,  
Love with me must ever grow;  
Loving you, it must be so.

Dearer, dearer, ever dearer;  
Loved in youth for that fair face,  
Now my heart has seen you nearer,  
That first love to this gives place,  
For your soul's diviner grace.

Ah! how sweet was that young passion,  
Caught from fairness, O how fair!  
That fed full even from the fashion  
Of the dress you deigned to wear,  
When your beauty sunned the air.

O the life-quake then that shook me  
When on me seemed turned that gaze,  
When hair, brow, speech or laughter took me  
Captive with a dumb amaze,  
Dazzled with your beauty's blaze.

Time that charm has not marred blindly,  
If his touch a harm has wrought,  
Still some rarer beauty, kindly,  
Every fondling year has brought,  
Softer, dearer to my thought.

How much more than youth was seeing  
Now I love, with heart grown wise;  
Now the whole dear perfect being  
I have fittler learned to prize,  
Clear at last to the soul's eyes!

Dearer through joys, cares, and sorrows;  
Known, how well! through smiles and tears,  
Now I feel that all the morrows,  
Hopes and pleasures, labours, fears,  
Bring but knowledge that endears.

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